authorized by Central Civil and Non-Civil Ministers for disbursement of pension in each State and Union Territory.

(b) RBI monitors the schemes for disbursement of pension to Central Civil/Defence/Railway/Telecom pensioners through Public/Private Sector Banks as approved by concerned Government Departments. According to these schemes, the amount of monthly pension, including family pension is to be credited by the paying branch of authorized bank selected by the pensioner to his or her account already opened or to be opened with that branch.

(c) and (d) The names of banks through which the pension amount is to be disbursed are decided by the Central Pension According Office (CPAO) in case of Civil Ministries and individually by the Non-civil Ministries. All Public sector banks and three Private sector banks are authorized to disburse pension. RBI issues authorizations on the recommendations of the concerned Ministry.

Varsha Bima Yojana

1530. SHRI C.RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the main features of the 'Varsha Bima Yojana' being run by Government;

(b) whether only the farmers of such areas can be benefited from this scheme which have the facilities to collect the rain related statistics;

(c) if so, the States where the farmers have been deprived of the benefits of this scheme because of the non-availability of rain related statistics, particularly in the State of Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) what steps Government propose to take so that all the farmers of those selected States may benefit from the said scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (AICL) has launched, during the Kharif-2005, a rainfall based insurance product, namely "Varsha Bima-2005" in 130 districts spread over the 10 States *viz.,* Andhra Pradesh, Chhattishgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal & Uttar Pradesh. It was voluntary for all classes of farmers. The Scheme provides two options-(i)Sowing Failure Insurance covering deficit rainfall from 15th June to 15th August and (ii) Seasonal Rainfall Insurance covering rainfall

during the entire crop season. The Scheme is available upto 15th June for Sowing Failure Option and upto 30th June for Seasonal Rainfall Insurance.

(b) The designing of a rainfall insurance product requires historical crop yield data and historical rainfall data for a period of atleast 30 years. At present India Meteorological Department (IMD) is the only independent agency recording the rainfall data and the IMD network is limited mostly to the Distt. Headquarters. Initially National Insurance Academy collected the rainfall data for 300 rain gauge stations. However, being a relatively new product, AICL decided to implement Varsha Bima Yojana in 130 IMD rain gauge stations only.

(c) At present only 130 districts in 10 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu, Uttranchal & Uttar Pradesh are covered under the scheme. In Andhra Pradesh, during Kharif-2005, the Scheme was launched in Ananthpur, Cuddapah, Warangal, Kurnool, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, East, Godawari and Vizag districts.

(d) AICL proposes to expand the Scheme and cover about250 IMD rain gauge stations across the country during Kharif-2006.

Short term refinancing by NABARD

1531. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Governments of Punjab, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh and some other States have demanded that percentage of short term refinance for seasonal agricultural operations of the NABARD should be enhanced form a mere 30 per cent to 75 per cent so that the farmers' dependence on State and Central Co-operative Banks with high rate of interest is proportionately curtalied; and

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Requests have been received to enhance the qunatum of short-term refinance from NABARD. Due to limited low cost funds available with NABARD, presently the enhancement has not been found feasible. However, Cooperative Banks' generally charge a higher rate of interest not only on account of extent of refinance by NABARD but also due to its multi-tier structure, high level of overdues, high transaction